



Philadelphia Inquirer (4-6) EPA: No cause for health concern in Dimock's water

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EPA: No cause for health concern in Dimock's water

April 06, 2012|By Andrew Maykuth, INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Well-water tests of 20 more homes in the embattled natural-gas drilling town of Dimock, Pa. showed no contamination levels "that present a health concern based on risk assessments," a spokesman for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Friday.

"This set of sampling did not show levels of contaminants that would give EPA reason to take immediate action," said Roy Seneca, a spokesman in EPA's regional office in Philadelphia.

The test results reinforced initial findings the EPA released last month on its tests of 11 other residential water wells in the Susquehanna County township, the epicenter of a clash between opponents and supporters of natural gas development in the Marcellus Shale formation.

EPA in January announced it would test 61 Dimock water wells and deliver water to four homes after some residents complained their water was contaminated by gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing. The residents, some of whom have sued Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. over drilling, said state regulators had improperly allowed Cabot to halt delivering fresh water supplies to some homes.

But so far, the EPA's tests have not differed remarkably from the tests conducted by the state, which showed some contaminants, but none that could be definitively linked to gas drilling or fracking. Three of the newly-tested wells showed methane while one showed barium above the EPA's maximum level.

"This data confirms the earlier EPA finding that levels of contaminants found do not possess a threat to human health and the environment," said George Stark, a spokesman for Cabot.

Anti-drilling activists said the results still show the wells are unhealthy. "EPA's test results continue to show what Dimock residents have claimed for years: the water is contaminated," said Claire Sandberg, a spokeswoman for Water Defense, a New York activist organization.

EPA said it will reevaluate the need to provide water after an additional round of testing.

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